

The Dominant Ninth in Music from 1900 to 1924, Part 2

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Abstract:

This continues the study of the major dominant ninth harmony in European and European-influenced music after 1900. Composers represented in Part 2 are Claude Debussy, Lili Boulanger, and Charles Griffes. Scholarship by Taylor Greer, Keith Waters, and Deborah Williamson is summarized and discussed. Composers whose stage works are discussed in the introduction are Herbert, Lehar, Mozart and Wagner.

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Introduction

1. This essay

This continues study of the major dominant ninth harmony in European and European-influenced music from 1900 through the US copyright barrier year, currently 1924.

From the introduction to Part 1:

By about 1890, the major dominant ninth harmony had become firmly established in compositional and improvisational practice. For more information and a variety of musical examples, see my essays [Dominant Ninth Harmonies in the 19th Century](#) (2018), [Dominant Ninth Harmonies in American Songs around 1900](#) (2019), and [The Dominant Ninth and Tonic Seventh in the Upper Tetrachord of the Major Key](#) (2020). [See also the extended introduction in Part 1, pp. 3-25.] After 1900, the V9 chord was routinely used in many musical genres. The two parts of this essay sample a few of those occurrences in repertoires ranging from the surprisingly conservative (American marches and ragtime) to the remarkably adventurous (French Impressionists and the English and American musicians influenced by them).

Composers represented in Part 1 include Costa Nogueras, Friml, Hageman, Herbert, Joplin, Kern, Lehar, Lincke, MacDowell, and Sousa.

Composers whose work is discussed here in Part 2 are Claude Debussy, Lili Boulanger, and Charles Griffes. Composers whose stage works are discussed in this introduction are Herbert, Lehar, Mozart and Wagner.

Thanks to the work reported on in the three essays named in the quote above, documentation had already proceeded far enough that in Part 1 of the present essay I largely needed only to present annotated score examples without additional text commentary. The typical figures (some as old as the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but most of them typical, even stereotypical, in music after 1860) include internal and external resolutions, parallelisms of ^6 over V and I, and expressive emphasis in climaxes and closing cadences. The point of the additional work in Part 1 was in general to suggest the extent of these practices through a variety of examples, not to make special claims about those particular instances.

Although all of these figures also occur in the music discussed here, in some fundamental ways the situation is quite changed, and therefore where the often radically different techniques and priorities of the French and American Impressionists appear, they will require some explication. For Debussy, because the literature is already very large, I have chosen only one representative middle-period composition, the first set of *Images* (1905).^{*} More attention is given to work by Lili Boulanger and Charles Griffes.

^{*} Four pieces by Debussy were discussed in my recent essay on the upper tetrachord ([link](#)): Valse romantique (1890), Arabesques nos. 1 & 2 (1891), and Valse “La plus que lente” (1910).

2. Categories of treatment of the ninth (1): harmony*

In one of the early posts to my blog *On the Dominant Ninth Chord* ([link to that post](#)), I set up categories for treatment of the 9th. They were:

1. Internal resolution (within the V chord)
 - 1.0. Element of melodic shape (step)
 - 1.1. Element of melodic shape (leap, off the beat)
 - 1.2. Element of chord, weak beat
 - 1.3. Element of chord, strong beat
2. External resolution (to the following chord, usually I)
 - 2.1. Indirect resolution to ^5
 - 2.2. Indirect resolution to ^6
 - 2.3. Direct resolution to ^5 or ^6

The careful distinctions under 1 were necessary for a sufficiently nuanced account of the treatment of the ninth in the first half of the 19th century and of some V9–Iadd6 pairings after about 1850. A simplified list that I have used for most music after about 1860 distinguishes between internal and external resolutions and, within the latter, indirect and direct resolutions. Here are examples of each of these types from this essay, Part 1.**

Internal resolutions:

Scott Joplin, *Leola* (1905), Trio, second strain: see bars that are enclosed in boxes.

The image shows a musical score for Scott Joplin's 'Leola' (1905), Trio, second strain. The score is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. It features a piano introduction marked 'mf grandioso'. The main melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. Two measures are enclosed in boxes: the first box contains measures 9 and 8, and the second box contains measures 1 and 2. The score ends with a 'Fine' marking.

*This section is repeated from Part 1.

**Also see multiple examples of internal and external resolutions in the introduction to my essay on American songs, pp. 4 ff.

Here is another, from Victor Herbert, *Orange Blossoms* (1922), in the Act 2 finale.

accel

K. No! No! No! No! I for-bid you!

R. love you! I love you! I love you!

accel

Internal resolutions occasionally take the ninth upward to the tenth, or third of the dominant harmony, as here in two examples from the final verse of a song by Edward MacDowell, op. 60, no. 2 "Fair Springtide" (1902).

ppp

Yet though the tears be bitt - er - sweet,

ppp

They come like sooth - ing Sum-merrain

External resolutions, direct:

Surprisingly, given the importance of the dominant ninth to the waltz repertoire, the famous “Merry Widow” waltz from the eponymous operetta by Franz Lehar (1906) has only one, but it is a sweetly expressive moment:

Valse moderato.
(getanzt.)

115 120 125 130 135 140 145

Repeating $\wedge 6$ over the resolving tonic is quite common, as here in a can-can from Act 3.

Valencienne. (als Gasette)

Ja, wir sind es, die Gri - set - ten von Pa - ri - ser Ca - ba - ret - ten Lo - lo! Do - do! Jou -

10 15

jou! Frou - frou! Clo - clo! Mar - got!

Here are two simple examples of direct resolutions from the first two numbers in Jerome Kern's *Have a Heart* (1917).

Refrain.

That's the way! It's al-ways the same, Ev - 'ry

day, It's al-ways the same.

6

One whose chief plea - sure would be

make - ing a for - tune for me; One

External resolutions, indirect:

These arise when ornamenting notes intervene or intervals are unfolded, most often $\hat{4}/\hat{6}-\hat{3}/\hat{5}$, as in the opening number of *Dodworth's Polka Quadrilles* (1850), bars 3-4.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "CALLY POLKA." in 2/4 time. The score is written for piano (ff) and features a melody with various ornaments. Above the staff, there are annotations: $\hat{6}$ above a measure, followed by a dashed line with $\hat{4}$ above it, then another dashed line with $\hat{5}$ above it, and finally $\hat{3}$ above a measure. A circled area in the second system highlights a specific ornamented note. The piece ends with a "Fine." marking.

Indirect resolutions also are frequently involved in parallel figures, which can be bar-to-bar, as above, but can stretch out to 2, 4, or even 8 bar levels. Such parallelisms are in fact one of the hallmarks of the waltz repertoire. The example below, however, is the 4/4 opening of the verse in "The Lonely Nest," also from Herbert's *Orange Blossoms*.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "The Lonely Nest" in 4/4 time. The score is written for voice and piano. The tempo is marked "Moderato espressivo". The score includes lyrics: "This house is room - y And ought to do me; Yet it seems gloom-y To me Where'er I roam". The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the voice and piano parts. The second system shows the voice and piano parts. A circled area in the second system highlights a specific ornamented note. The piece ends with a "Fine." marking.

Special figures mentioned at the beginning of the introduction include the expressive V9 and V9/V in the approach to a cadence, and the major dominant ninth chord as the cadential dominant. Here is the former near the end of the verse in Rudolf Friml's popular song "Chansonette" (1923).

For the major dominant ninth chord as the cadential dominant, see again "The Lonely Nest" from Herbert's *Orange Blossoms* on the previous page: the circled G: V9/V with the V7 that follows closes the antecedent of the verse's 16-bar theme.

Here is the cadence ending the 32-bar theme of the first waltz in Cyril Scott's *Valse triste*, op. 73, no. 3 (1910). The emphasis on the ninth combined with an internal resolution is very common in cadence figures.

A V9 ends the antecedent phase in the verse of “I’m so Busy,” the second number in Jerome Kern’s *Have a Heart* (1917). The direct resolution overlaps into the beginning of the consequent (bar 9 in the example).

The image displays a musical score for the song "I'm so Busy" by Jerome Kern. It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system shows the vocal line starting with "One I whose chief plea - sure would be" and the piano accompaniment. The second system shows the vocal line continuing with "make - ing a for - tune for me; One" and "But I am bus - y at last, I've". A rectangular box highlights the piano accompaniment in the second system, specifically the measures corresponding to the lyrics "for - tune for me; One" and "bus - y at last, I've", illustrating the V9 chord resolution discussed in the text.

And, finally, the ending of Debussy's *Valse romantique* (1890).

The image shows a musical score for the ending of Debussy's *Valse romantique*. It features a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is marked "1^o Tempo" and the dynamics include "ff" (fortissimo). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. An arrow points to a specific chord in the piano part, likely indicating the V9 chord resolution mentioned in the text.

3. Categories of treatment of the ninth (1): sound and duration

In the series of blog posts on internal and external resolutions, I included a second category: duration and sound (see again the list at the head of §2 above). For this purpose the ninth chord is considered independently of harmonic function, but only initially: the goal is to interpret the (potential) dominant ninth harmony in terms of a *balance* of status of harmony and other elements, especially metric position, relative length, register, and loudness. Aided by the slow tempo in the well-known “Flower Duet” (“Sous le dôme épais”) from Delibes’s *Lakmé* we can hear this balance easily between B: V9 ending the antecedent phase and the tonic that follows.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the 'Flower Duet' from Delibes's *Lakmé*. The first system, labeled with measure numbers 19 and 20, features two vocal parts (L. and M.) and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'poco rall.' for measures 19 and 20, and 'a Tempo.' for measure 21. The piano part includes a 'poco rall.' marking in measure 20 and a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking in measure 21. The second system, labeled with measure numbers 22 and 23, continues the vocal and piano parts. The piano part in measure 22 features a 'pp' marking. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: 'sean chante, l'oiseau, l'oiseau chan - te.' (L.), 'Et l'oiseau, l'oiseau chan - te.' (M.), 'Dô - me é - pais,' (L.), 'Sous le dôme é - pais,' (M.), 'blanc jas - min, Nous ap - pel -' (L.), 'Sous le blanc jas - min, Ah! des - cen -' (M.).

More and more as the 19th century goes on, a simple harmonic functional reductionism comes up against overwhelming color (instrumentation, voicing, pedal in the piano) and/or duration. It was the even more radical position—*detaching* sound or color from functional syntax—that drove the most striking and influential style innovations of Debussy and his successors.

The poster child for duration, of course, is the “Tristan chord.” *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) as a whole is a treasure trove of chromatic harmonies and expressive appoggiaturas, accented neighbor notes, and simply non-harmonic notes of more than usual duration. In its first chord, there is dramatic tension between harmony and sonority in Wagner's insistence on the length of

the G#4 appoggiatura and the brevity of its resolution note A4 (the only reasonable harmonic functional explanation for bar 2 is an augmented sixth chord that resolves to V7 in bar 3). Here and throughout there is continual shifting of roles between a pitch and its half-step neighbor. The initial ambiguity hints at this: is the long-held F4 a chord tone in bar 1 (part of a suppressed iv—which would make the overall progression a: iv-+6-V7), or is it an appoggiatura to E4 and thus the harmony in bar 1 is an incomplete tonic A3-(C4)-E4? By parallelism, bar 2 favors the second possibility, but observe that in bar 5 the long note is not heard as an appoggiatura but as a chord member of the preceding E7 (the same for B4 in bar 8: it is a member of the preceding G7 chord in bar 7). This shifting role for melodic elements is one of the hallmarks of *Tristan und Isolde*.

(a) Musical excerpt showing a piano (pp) section with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A box highlights a specific melodic phrase. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *cres.*

(b) Musical excerpt showing a piano (p) section with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A box highlights a specific melodic phrase. Dynamics include *p*, *pp*, and *cres.*

(c) Musical excerpt showing a piano (p) section with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A box highlights a specific melodic phrase. Dynamics include *f*, *più f*, and *ff*.

At (b) and (c) above, F#5 changes from the fifth of a B7 chord to the ninth in E9, which receives an internal ascending resolution, as sketched here:

a: V7/V V(9) 7 VI

Near the close of Isolde's "Liebestod," the imbalance of harmony and duration is equally obvious. The two examples below could be reduced as at the right (I could have gone even further to remove doublings and "regularize" the voiceleading) and that would give us information, but for the second one so much would be lost that the value of that information would be scant indeed.



I. schal - - lend, mich - um - wal - - lend, sind es

I. Welt - - - A - - - hems

I. we - - - hen - dem All -

Continuing the discussion of duration and sound in relation to the ninth chord—that is, in terms of a *balance* of status of harmony and other elements, especially metric position, relative length, register, and loudness, I return to other examples from Part 1 of this essay, beginning with Victor Herbert's operetta *Orange Blossoms*. The three points of interest with respect to harmony are color (complexity, adding notes), duration (making dissonance longer), and the undermining of traditional harmonic syntax. The beginning of the *Tristan* Prelude certainly takes a radical step with the second of these and contributes to color as well, although its colorful “chord” is ambiguous rather than complex. The ambiguity might suggest undermining of harmonic syntax, too, but the figure of each two-chord gesture is obviously that of predominant-dominant or S-D function and thus firmly within tradition, as is the eventual deceptive resolution to VI.

In “A Kiss in the Dark,” the third number in *Orange Blossoms*, much the same happens on a smaller scale. The example is from Part 1; waltz uses of V9s are boxed. The accented dissonances are characteristic of the waltz repertoire, as I discuss at some length in [The Dominant Ninth and Tonic Seventh in the Upper Tetrachord of the Major Key](#). The sounds one hears in the first five bars are remarkable: in bar 1 a $c\#o7$ which one is obliged retrospectively to understand as the upper part of a V9; in bar 2 a whole-tone fragment $C\#-D\#-G-A$ until the final 16th note; in bar 3 the $o7$ again, in bar 4 a sharp dissonance where $G\#$ is added to an incomplete $A7$, again until the last 16th note; in bar 5 an incomplete $f\#7$. Thus color is strongly affected by means of duration. As in the *Tristan* Prelude, overall harmonic syntax is not disturbed, as four bars of V7 and V9 are followed by four bars of I.

Refrain *A little slower*
allegretto

Kiss in the dark Was to

35

him just a lark, But to

39

To the third item in the list: again from Part 1, this short excerpt of dialogue underscore from *The Merry Widow*, Act 2, number 10, does connect V9 to an odd harmonic progression. This is the end of the section and the first bars of the subsequent dance-duet. The clearly presented V9 in the cadence (bar 17) is rare for Lehar, and the chord sequence—from its bass line E2-F#2 a deceptive cadence A: V9-vi—is what is called a retrogression with respect to chord roots, or E-D. I have mapped out several ways to think about this in my own musical example. At (a) the complete series of chords with Roman numerals; at (b), a syntactically coherent version that arises if the bass F# and G are considered to be passing tones. At (c) is a three-step way to justify the progression A: V9-IV6; at (c1) the normative progression, at (c2) a standard deceptive resolution to vi, at (c3) substitution of IV for vi, as if VI/vi. It was layered schemes like this that gave rise to the late-19th century expression “Any chord may follow any other chord.” In this case, there is a simple dramatic justification: Hanna says “I would tell my man” over the expressive (and emphatic) dominant ninth and accidentally starts to say “Dear Da[nilo].” He reacts happily [*freudig*] to the deceptive chord, but she continues with the routine cadence.

II. Allegretto moderato.

Hanna: Sehen Sie, da würde ich zu meinem Manne sagen: Lieber Da...! Danilo (*freudig*) Da? Hanna (*lacht*) Dagobert! Des- we-

Vlc. Solo

gen bin ich nicht in Paris!
Führ' mich wo anders hin. Danilo (*singt*) *Allegretto.*
Er führt sie zu Ma - xim,

Viol.

(a) (b)

D: V9/V I6 ii^{♭6}₅ V — I D: V9/V V — I

(c1) (c2) (c3)

A: V9 I V9 vi V9 VI/iv

Dialogue underscoring has strong historical roots in recitative, which was characterized by clusters of short harmonic progressions in a key, and there may or may not be any overall pattern of tonalities, the latter especially being the case in secco recitative in opera, oratorios, and cantatas. Early in Act 3 of *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), Count Almaviva realizes he is being tricked by Figaro and Susanna and vows to get even. Here is the first half of his recitative; the second half is more firmly settled in D major. (Example continues on the next page.) Note the pockets of key regions—roughly by system here—but a decidedly uncommon sequence of those regions: C, a, f#, D.

Note also that the move from A minor to F# minor is accomplished by deleting the root of the E7 chord and then changing a tone of the diminished triad. See the example at the right. We will see sophisticated versions of this device in Debussy's "Mouvement" (*Images I*) in §1 below.

a: V7 (°)

f#: V6/5 i

Maestoso.
Graf (der die letzten Worte gehört hat).
Der Prozeß schon gewonnen? Wie? was hör ich? Al-so ward dies ein Fallstrick!
Hai già vin - ta la causa? Co - sa sen-to? In qual lac-cio ca - de - a!

Str. Quart. *f* *fp*

C: I ————— V4/3 7 I +6 V

5 Presto.
Treulo-se! Ich will euch, will euch schon streng genug be-
Per-fè-di! Io vo-glio, io vo-glio di tal mo-do pu-

Ob. *f* Quart.

V/vi ————— 7
or a: V ————— 7

6. *9* strafen;
nir-vi; nach meiner Willkür wird der Ur-teilsspruch sein!
a piacer mi - o la sen-ten - za sa - rà!

Tutti.

f#: V6/5 _____ **i** _____

(f# could be vi of A major or iii of D major)

13 *Andante.* Quart. u. Ob. Doch wenn mit Gel-de man Marcel - li - nen
Ma sei pa - gas-se la vecchia preten-

p Viol.

(f#: i) _____ **= D: iii** **V6/5** **ii** **ii** **V6/5**

17 *Allegro.* abkauft? Mit Gelde? mit was für Gelde?
dente? Pagarla? in qual manie-ra?

Quart. *p* Tutti. *f*

(D:) I _____

Here is another example of recitative by Mozart, from *Don Giovanni* (1787). Early in Act 1, Donna Anna finds the body of her father, the Commendatore, after Don Giovanni has killed him. The piano-vocal score is followed by my reduction of the harmony. See my comments following the reduction. My example begins at bar 10, numbered here as bar 1.

A *1* *f*

Il
My

f:

i V _____

(throws herself upon the corpse) D. Octavio. D. Anna.

Padre, padre mi-o! mio ca-ro padre! Si-gnore! Ah, l'assas-si-no mel tru-ci-
 Father, oh my father, look but upon me! Oh ter-ror! Ah, by th'as-sas-sin art thou un-

(f:) V ————— V7/III

(examining the corpse more carefully)

dò.
done!

Cl. fb. Fog.

Quel san-gue — quel-la pia-ga —
 Thou'rt wounded — blood is flowing —

(sequence)

(f:) III i V6 $\frac{vii^4}{3}$ V6 as if in G? as if

quel volto — tin-to e co-per-to del co-lor di mor-te.
 this pallor! Si-lent and pale, thou heed-est not my cry-ing!

in A? as if in B? ——— yes!

(D. Octavio offers to raise her; she refuses)

Ei non re-spi-ra più! fred-de le
 I cannot hear him breathe! Cold, cold as

b: V7 ——— Vm9 VI also G:I, D:IV

(she rises) (she reels)

A. membra! Pa-dre mi-o! ca-ro padre! pa-dre a-mato!
marble! Oh my father, best of fathers! an-swer me, father!

Wind.

24 Strgs. *f* *p*

d: V7 ——— i ——— (°7) v_2^4 bII

(D. Octavio supports her, and leads her to the stone seat)

A. io manco! io moro! Ah! soccor-re-te-a-mi-ci,
O. oh help me! I die! Oh, by this dire af-fliction

Don Octavio. (to the servants)

Wind.

30 (35)

d: $vii^\circ_3^4$ $\frac{vii^\circ 7}{V}$ +6 i !! $\frac{V6}{V}$

3 10

f: i V ——— V7/III III i V6 WT sequence ———

C D E

15 20 25

F#

b: V7 ——— VI

D: IV — () V7 d: V7 i °7 v_2^4 bII6

30 35

d: $vii^\circ_3^4$ $\frac{vii^\circ 7}{V}$ +6 v ! $\frac{V6}{V}$

The opening proceeds firmly in F minor, including a brief shift toward III, Ab major, then returning. The remarkable whole-tone sequence that begins in bar 8 accompanies Donna Anna's increasing alarm and brings the harmony to a distant B minor, which in turn quickly moves through its relative D major (though without sounding the tonic) to the parallel D minor as she seems to realize fully that her father has died. Mozart pushes things to their limit by distorting a normal chromatic S-D progression, d: +6–V, in bars 34–35, changing it to d: +6–v as Donna Anna cries out “io moro!” (“I die!”).

I do not make a direct connection between later 19th century practices (though such claims have certainly been made via Wagnerian opera)—instead, my point is that devices exploited in those later practices were already present in a ubiquitous 18th century genre. Even in the last few bars of the excerpt above, color is fully represented, not by added notes but by a typical 18th-century complexity of chromatic profusion, duration by the overwhelming presence of chromatic chords as opposed to diatonic ones, and the undermining of harmonic syntax by same and by the distortion of a stereotypical gesture (to d: +6–v).

4. Final note

The reader is invited to skip this section of the introduction and go to the next page, the beginning of §1 on Debussy, where the presentation is intended to follow directly with examples of complexity achieved by chordal color (adding notes), duration (making dissonances longer), and the undermining of traditional harmonic syntax.

Here I want briefly to stress that the basic argument and narrative presented above is by no means original—it is all part of the standard account of the progress of harmony through the 19th century. What I have done is to position the major dominant ninth chord in that familiar context. It is for the reason of that familiarity that I have not cited or quoted from published sources, as would be typical of a research article—in any case, my primary goal is documentation—but in addition, as I have mentioned in several previous essays, for a personal reason, because I gave away almost all my books when I retired five years ago, at the time assuming no further writing in music studies. My interest in a few topics, however, has persisted—ascending cadence gestures, form function theory after Caplin, and of course the dominant ninth chord—but I now live in an area where physical library access is (unexpectedly) limited. That being the case, in each of the three sections below I have called on only one source readily available in digital form and immediately relevant to the discussion: for Debussy, Keith Waters's article on “*Reflets dans l'eau*”; for Boulanger, Deborah Williamson's DMA dissertation on *Clairières dans le ciel*; and for Griffes, Taylor Greer's analysis of “The White Peacock.”

§ I: Debussy

*Images I*re Serie (1905), no. 3 “Mouvement”

I will comment on all three pieces in *Images I* but begin with the third because it continues discussion from the last section of the introduction.

This is the lead-in to the first restatement of the main theme:

G9, but with C

molto cresc.

8

ff

8

The bass makes the traditional tonal foundation very clear indeed: V at the end of a retransition to I at the moment the recapitulation begins. At (a) below, I have shown the traditional V7-I expected in such cases. At (b) is a reasonable interpretation of bars 1-2 (and possibly bar 3) as a V11. At (c) I have accounted for all the notes, which is what we would hear if the damper pedal were held as the bass notes would seem to require. At (d) are notes struck on each eighth-note beat in bars 2-3, plus the leading tone, which is the final pitch in bar 3. Both duration and color are well served, the latter especially if the pedal is held down (even more so if it is likewise held through bars 4-5).

(a) (b) (c) (d)

In the middle of the recapitulation, about 25 bars from the end, the harmony consists of three expanded complex chords with strong whole-tone qualities but whose foundation is the major dominant ninth chord.

At (a) below the excerpt is a simplified reading of the basic chords in bars 3 and 6, as a first inversion, then root position D9. At (b1) is a D9/#11; its five-note whole-tone segment is to the right; A5 does not participate. At (b2) the A5 is raised to A#5, giving a complete whole-tone scale and D(#11) with raised 5. This last reflects the complete pitch contents of bars 3-6.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled '1' and the bottom staff is labeled '4'. The top staff has a piano introduction with a 'p dim' marking. The bottom staff shows a complex chord structure with a 'as if D9' annotation and a circled '11#5' in the bass line.

(Musical example continues on the next page)

The image shows four simplified chord diagrams labeled (a), (b), (b1), and (b2). (a) shows D9/F# and D9. (b) shows D9 and D#11. (b1) shows a whole-tone scale (WT) and D#11. (b2) shows a whole-tone scale (WT) and D#11+5.

Continued from the previous page. For commentary, see the following page.

7 8-
pp
as if F#9 (2d inversion)
p

11 8-
pp

14 8-
as if C9
più p

17 8-
pp
presque plus rien

21 8-
pp

At (c) is the sonority at bar 7 in the excerpt above; it remains stable through bar 12 against the whole tone segment in the melody — see (d1). Note that the bass C# is the one pitch that does not participate in the scale. At (d2) this is corrected, so to speak, as the same melodic idea is heard with another whole-tone four-note cluster in the upper register and C-natural in the bass. Color and duration are again served, and this time the undermining of traditional harmonic syntax, as well. At (e) is a sketch of the entire 24 bars. Some aspects of a traditional progression are still present, but there are “as if” caveats: the chords act as if they form a traditional S-D-T cadence: the whole-tone D9 acts as if S, the more dissonant C# bass against a whole segment acts as if D (that is, dominant function), and “resolves” into the final whole-tone C9, which acts as if T. But equally — or, rather, more concretely — one hears a static whole-tone scale in the middle and upper registers against a bass moving chromatically down.

The diagrams illustrate harmonic structures in a whole-tone context:

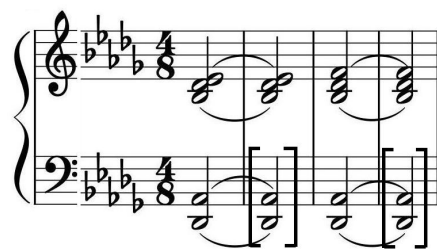
- (c)** Shows a sonority at bar 7. The bass line has a whole-tone four-note cluster (F#, G, A, B) and a C# below it. The upper register has a whole-tone four-note cluster (F#, G, A, B). The chord is labeled **F#9** over **C#**.
- (d1)** Shows a whole-tone segment in the melody (WT) against the same bass line. The chord is labeled **C9**.
- (d2)** Shows a whole-tone segment in the melody (WT) against a different bass line. The chord is labeled **C9**.
- (e)** Shows a sketch of the entire 24 bars. The bass line moves chromatically down. The chords are labeled **D9**, **F#9** over **C#**, and **C9**.

Debussy, *Images* Ire Serie (1905), no. 1 “Reflets dans l’eau”

With the opening bar of “Reflets” we have reached the point where the entire major-scale contents are sounded through a held damper pedal. In bar 3 it is six of the seven tones.

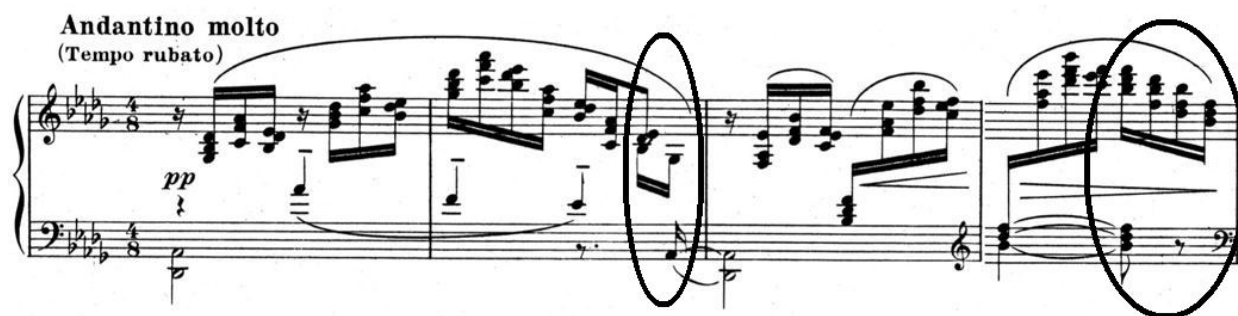
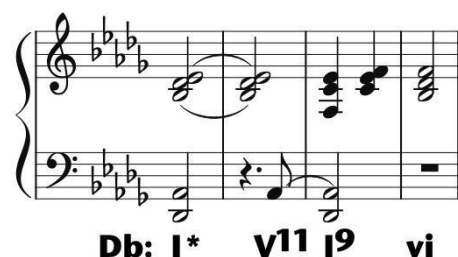
The notation shows the opening of Debussy's “Reflets dans l’eau” from *Images* Ire Serie (1905), no. 1. The tempo is marked **Andantino molto** (Tempo rubato). The piece is in 4/8 time. The bass line features a held damper pedal, and the melody is characterized by whole-tone clusters and chromatic movement. The notation includes dynamic markings such as **pp** and **ppp**.

Δ^4 is left out, the overall effect then being a dissonant sonority over the tonic bass in bars 1-2 and a “resolving” sonority in bars 3-4, so:



But the situation isn't as simple as that. Below are bars 1-4 again. In bar 2, the bass fifth is gone, but at the last moment $\Delta b2$ is sounded—see the circled notes, which give a definite sound of $V11$, that distinctive cadential sonority in French music after about 1870.

At the right is that version, along with its companion vi “cleared out” in bar 4 from what would otherwise have been $Iadd6$.



In an article on “bridges,” Keith Waters hears the opening a bit differently (his Example 4b is below).^{*} He calls this example “regularized,” meaning a simplified voiceleading map. The example—the explanation, too—is confusing, as the bass fifth is mostly ignored: “The undulating harmonies and octave displacements may be heard as an especially beautiful elaboration of a simpler harmonic framework . . . an embellishment of the plagal harmonies of Gb (Chord 1) and Eb -minor 7th (Chord 3).” And: “despite the rippling surface of the music, Example 4b shows the overall harmonic activity consisting of an elaboration of plagal harmony (measures 1–2) and an elaboration of tonic harmony (measures 3–4), all appearing over a tonic pedal point in the bass. As a result, the rondo refrain—and the work—begins in open-ended fashion with a plagal cadence.” The technique of layering is well-



^{*} Keith Waters, “Other Good Bridges: Continuity and Debussy’s ‘Reflets dans l’eau,’” *Music Theory Online* 18/3 (2012). The quotes are from paragraphs 15, 16, and 30.

known as an essential compositional device of Debussy's, but it is very difficult to hear the right-hand chord layer independently of the bass Db2-Ab2; indeed, such reinforced roots ensure the primacy of a harmonic bass despite any and all complexities in the upper parts/layers. They are exactly the binary moments that Waters deprecates: "I am not especially interested in claiming that Debussy's music is most aptly represented by metaphors of circles or lines. It may be that, like many facile binary distinctions, such an approach is a useful heuristic entry point for addressing and penetrating much more complex questions." This last—"much more complex questions"—is code for the traditional hermeneutics of music analysis. One feels compelled to find one's "window" into interpretation in some form or other at the beginning of a piece. I take that as the motivation for the forced reading of the opening bars.

The practical goal of Waters's article is to show how the contents of layers overlap the formal seams (the design is A1-B-A2-C-A3; I have indicated these on the complete reduction a few pages below). The A3 statement, beginning in bar 71—see *I° Tempo* below—is a good example and involves a V9 harmony in the transition ("bridge"). Unlike the dominant for the bridge to the A2 statement, this one lacks the third, so that the bass Ab1/Ab2 (reinforced by its fifth) is below and the 5th-7th-9th triad (or Eb minor) is above. The effect in bars 71-72, however, is not plagal: it is instead the upper layer without its bass, which reasserts itself in bar 75.

69 *sempre pp* **Db: V9**

73 **vi**

1° Tempo (en retenant jusqu'à la fin)

ii 6/4

Some additional instances of V9. The first is in the B section, planing of V9 chords over an arpeggiated diminished chord frame.

19 *pp* **Db9***

20 *Quasi cadenza.* **Fadd6?**

pp poco a poco cresc. e stringendo

Db9* E9* G9* Bb9* etc.

A few bars later expansive arpeggiations: ab9 (bar 26) turns into Ab9—boxed in bars 27-29.

A reduction of the harmony in the latter half of section C (partial score on the next page):

56-57 58 60

Chord Reduction:

Eb: I **Ab:** V9 (WT) V9 **Gb:** V7 V^{+5/#11} i

Bbb: vi iv I biii

A: vi iv I biii I

Db: bVI region——— V9

A firm arrival on Eb major gives way quickly to V9 chords and some whole-tone elements, eventually reaching Db: V9 as the harmonic hook of the transition/bridge to section A3. I have marked a Bbb (or A) major triad in bar 62 but the region is by no means stable.

Note the curious feature of the bass (right), where it moves in a cycle-of-fifths/fourths manner, but only the first and last chords have the bass as root.

56-57 58 60

56 *f*

57 *ff*

59

68 *pp*

An informal reduction of the harmony in the entire piece:

A1

B

bars 5-8 = 1-4 -----

10 15 19 20 25 26 30 41 45 50 54 55 60 65 68 70 75 80 82 85 90

A2 bars 35-42 = 1-8

C (= 7-8)

A3

Coda

Debussy, *Images I*re Serie (1905), no. 2 “Hommage à Rameau”

For this one I have provided examples of the occasional appearance of major dominant ninth chords.

B section, beginning, where the V9 is a distinct sound not heard in the A section.



Bar 8 of the B section, with familiar expanded V9 and transpositions/planing:

This musical score shows Bar 8 of the B section of Debussy's "Hommage à Rameau". The tempo marking is "au Mouvt". The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a piano (p) dynamic. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the bar with a major dominant ninth chord (D major 9th) in the right hand, with the left hand playing a bass line. The second system shows the middle of the bar with a major dominant ninth chord (D major 9th) in the right hand, with the left hand playing a bass line. The third system shows the end of the bar with a major dominant ninth chord (D major 9th) in the right hand, with the left hand playing a bass line. The notation includes various ornaments and phrasing slurs.

End of the B section and return of A:

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the end of the B section with a **ff** dynamic and a tempo marking of **a Tempo 1°**. The second system continues the B section with a **dim.** marking and a **p** dynamic, featuring a **(D13)** chord and a **(CM7)** chord. The third system shows the return of the A section with a **Rit.** marking, a **più p** dynamic, and a **pp** dynamic, featuring a **(D13)** chord and a **au Mouvt** marking.

Bars 3-5 of the recapitulation:

The musical score for bars 3-5 of the recapitulation is shown. The first system has a **pp** dynamic and a **g#°7** chord. The second system has a **pp** dynamic and a **G#9*** chord. The third system has a **pp** dynamic and a **D#7** chord. The fourth system has a **pp** dynamic and a **g#** chord. The chords are labeled as **g#°7**, **A4₂**, **G#9***, **g#°7**, **A4₂**, **D#7**, and **g#**.

*with changes of bass

§ 2: Lili Boulanger

Clairières dans le ciel (1914; 1918)

Boulanger won the Prix de Rome in 1913, the first woman to do so. She composed this song cycle during her time at the Villa de Medici, one of the benefits of the prize, and for a specific voice, the tenor David Devriés, who had sung in the first performance of Boulanger's winning Prix de Rome cantata, *Faust et Hélène* (Williamson, 51).^{*} The cycle "is well suited to only the highly trained light lyric tenor voice"; the composer herself suggested transpositions down at least a step if the cycle is sung by a soprano.

In terms of the cycle's setting and argument, a male voice is also to be preferred. Boulanger set 13 of 24 poems in Francis Jammes's *Tristesses* (1906), whose theme is the poet's reminiscences about his lost love (the reason she is gone is not revealed). The moods vary from pleasant memories to doubt to anguish. The title is the composer's and translates as "glades in the sky," an apparent reference to nature imagery of meadows and other spaces, which appears immediately in the first song, "Elle était descendue," whose full first line is "Elle était descendue au bas de la prairie" ("She had gone down to the foot of the meadow") (translation from Williamson, 12).

A precocious child and musical prodigy who lived in a highly musical Parisian family, Boulanger was able to experience and absorb a variety of influences, including Wagner, Fauré, and Debussy, but also to develop a personal style early on.

Here is a list of the thirteen songs. Column 3 is the opening key, column 4 the closing key, column 5 the number of bars, and column 6 a brief description.

Title	#	c3	c4	c5	descriptive (from Williamson)
"Elle était descendue"	1	E	E	25	tender remembrance
"Elle est gravement gaie"	2	E	E	30	continues description
"Parfois, je suis triste"	3	a	a	50	loss of love; unhappiness
"Un poète disait"	4	E	E	45	joyful again
"Au pied de mon lit"	5	e	E	40	Virgin icon; doubt, gratitude
"Si tout ceci n'est . . ."	6	f	F	40	melancholy (was it a dream?)
"Nous nous aimerons tant"	7	Db	Db	40	tender; touch, no words needed
"Vous m'avez regardé"	8	E	E	35	recalls beginning of cycle
"Les lilas qui avaient fleuri"	9	Phry.	Db	45	anguish
"Deux ancolies se balançaient"	10	?	C	40	vulnerable; risk love
"Par ce que j'ai souffert"	11	d?	C	40	anguish; passionate
"Je garde une médaille"	12	d	d	14	anguish, melancholy deeper
"Demain fera un an"	13	d	d	125	walk; year later; story's end

^{*} Deborah Williamson, "A Performer's Analysis of Lili Boulanger's *Clairières dans le ciel*: Song Cycle for High Voice and Piano," DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2001.

Clairières dans le ciel (1914; 1918), no. 12 “Je garde une médaille”

Overall, one can say that the major dominant ninth plays a familiar role, prominent in the pastoral songs of happy reminiscence, largely absent in the melancholy songs—but that is a bit too simple, as the penultimate song will demonstrate.

The mood is dark and depressed, its images that of a medallion that “belonged to [the poet’s] love and which he has kept. The keepsake, however, is tarnished now and the dark medal reminds him of the tarnished emotions associated with her” (Williamson, 19).

I will discuss the opening shortly. In bar 4, the dominant ninth plays its common 19th-century part as an expressive highpoint, but it is undercut in two ways: (1) by the bass octave D; (2) by continuation to a higher moment of climax in bar 6, where the chord is a dominant-seventh type over what has now become a pedal-point D. In bar 4 the text is “words” or “inscription,” but in bars 5 & 6 we hear those words: “pray, believe, hope.” Clearly, the true highpoint is the ironic “hope.”

Assez lent et bien mesuré

p avec gravité

Je garde une médaille d'elle..... où sont gravés..... une date et les

f *p* *f* *p* *las* *poco*

mots:..... pri-er,..... croi-re, espé-rer. Mais.... moi,.... je vois sur-

mf *f* *p* *poco* *p sombre lourd*

4

At the beginning, the same Bb9 in the same voicing—without the intruding pedal D—is the outer point of a wedge figure that is another one of those striking passages balancing sound/color and function. From the bass, we can conclude that the progression is D-Aeolian: i-VII-VI-VII-i, but the chordal contents contradict the modal scale, adding up to D-E-F-G-(Ab)-A-Bb-(B)-C. And the chordal colors overwhelm the functions: the stark open fifth in the first

chord, the major7 in the second, and the dominant ninth in the third. Even in Debussy, the M7 is most often associated with a tonic or other triad acting in a similarly stable capacity—but not here.

Williamson (44-45) observes that the voice breaks from the harmony for “criere” (“believe”) in bar 5. The same thing happens for “moi” in bar 7, where the chords over the D pedal are minor-add6 or dominant seventh types (chords 5-8 below). The extreme point of the voice’s separation from the harmony is in bar 9—see the score for the song’s second half at the bottom of the page): chord 9 is a +6 but with G-nat5 in the voice again, the note held long, and the result quite dissonant for “sombre” (“dark” in Williamson’s translation). The sound of this sonority is simply allowed to dissipate over time, and the piano’s initial chord sequence returns but with wider spacing, such that the characteristic sound of the dominant ninth chord is barely recognizable.

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) shows a piano introduction with a D pedal point and chords 1, 2, 3, 2, 1*. The second system (measures 4-9) includes the voice entry with lyrics: "est som - bre:". The piano part features chords 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The third system (measures 10-12) continues the piano part with chords 7, 8, and 9, and the voice part with lyrics: "lom - be.....". The score is annotated with performance instructions such as *p*, *las*, *poco*, *p sombre lourd*, *avec tendresse*, and *pp éteint, sans nuances*.

Clairières dans le ciel (1914; 1918), no. 1 “Elle était descendue”

The cycle ends in a modal D minor; it begins in a modal E major. This song has a pastoral affect and is unusually rich in dominant ninths, beginning with a neighboring VII, as D9—see the first and second boxes below. By sequence downward, we hear two more dominant ninth chords in bars 5 and 6, leading to a cadential tonic 6/4 (bar 7—next page) that moves to a modal *v* in the second half of that bar. The arrival on E in voice and bass is colored by a D-natural that suggests eventual “clearing” to E7, but instead a turn to C#9 initiates another series of ninth chords: E9, G9, Bb9, C#9 again, F#9 in bar 11, and finally a plausible but complex Eb13 (bar 12), a similar B9 (bar 14) and G9 (bar 15). The section ends with an A9 (bar 19); Boulanger makes some use of such section-ending ninth chords throughout the cycle. The melancholy turn in the following bars marks a turn to half-diminished sevenths, and the figure of the beginning returns to close the song, including one last instance of the neighboring D9.

The musical score is for the song "Clairières dans le ciel" (1914; 1918), no. 1 "Elle était descendue". It is in E major, 3/4 time, with a tempo of "Modéré". The score includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part is marked "pp très enveloppé". The score includes three boxed sections: the first box highlights the beginning of the song, the second box highlights the middle section, and the third box highlights the end of the song. The lyrics are: "Elle était descendue au bas de la prairie et, comme la prairie, était toute fleuries de plantes dont la tige aime à pousser dans l'eau ces".

rall.....

plan - - - tes i - non - dé - es je les a - vais cueil -

7 *pp* *rall.....*

- li - - es

Un peu plus mouvementé *p* Bientôt,..... s'é-tant mouillé - e,

8 *cresc.....* *p subito* *Un peu plus mouvementé* *lié*

el-le ga-gna le haut de cet-te prairie là qui é - tait tou-te fleu -

10 *rit:.....* *pp* *rit:.....*

- ri - - e. El-le ri -

12 *très expressif et soutenu* *mf* *rit:.....*

14

- ait et s'é-brau-ait..... a-vec la grâ - ce dé-gin-gan -

pp

mf

16

- dé - e qu'ont les jeu-nes fil - les trop gran - des

p

mf

avec mélancolie, comme dans un souvenir

p

El-le a-vait le re - gard qu'ont les fleurs de la -

18

- van - de.

21

pp

pp

Enchaînez avec le N°2

The “colored” resolution to E in bar 8 involves a device facilitated by complex chords and commonly used by composers in this era. At (a) below the score is the initial voicing of the chord; at (b) a common treatment as V11 of A major; at (c) the voicings on each beat in the remainder of the bar plus a C# major triad that follow in a traditional half-cadence to f#: V. The bass E is lost, and the inherent ambiguity of bm7 and Dadd6 is exploited till a bass reappears at the end of the bar. That ambiguity is demonstrated at (d) and (e): at (d1) Dadd6; at (d2) bm7; at (d3) the “clearing” to a D major triad by removing the bass B2; and at (e) an analogous “clearing” of a Dadd6 to a B minor triad by removal of the identifying fifth D3-A3.

The image shows a musical score for bar 8. The top part is a vocal line with lyrics: "li - es", "Bientôt,.....", and "s'é-tant mouillé - e,". The piano part is below, with a "cresc..." marking and a "p subito" marking. The piano part is divided into sections labeled a, b, c, d1, d2, d3, and e. Below the score are chord diagrams for each section. The diagrams show the following chords: a) Ebadd6, b) Ebadd6, c) Ebadd6, d1) Dadd6, d2) bm7, d3) D major triad, and e) B minor triad.

A similar though more complex “clearing” happens in bar 12—also see the score again on the next page. Recall that the bass Eb octave is struck just before the first beat. The third staff here is the tenor. Each beat of bar 12 is shown as a bar here. Because of the bass the overall effect is Ebadd6 (if giving priority to the tenor’s C4) or Eb13 if one takes the notes struck on the beat and within the beat. As the held bass Eb dissipates and the tenor ends with F3, the remaining sound is that of a DbM7, a bit simpler than the DbM9 in the upper parts at the beginning of the bar.

The image shows a musical score for bar 12. The top part is a vocal line with lyrics: "li - es", "Bientôt,.....", and "s'é-tant mouillé - e,". The piano part is below, with a "cresc..." marking and a "p subito" marking. The piano part is divided into sections labeled a, b, c, d1, d2, d3, and e. Below the score are chord diagrams for each section. The diagrams show the following chords: a) Ebadd6, b) Ebadd6, c) Ebadd6, d1) Dadd6, d2) bm7, d3) D major triad, and e) B minor triad.

12

très expressif et soutenu

p rit:.....

- ri - e.

El-le ri -

On the pairing of E and D:

As songs nos. 1 & 12 above already suggested, the tonal centers of E and D have an expressive and possibly also symbolic relationship in the cycle (Williamson, 36). The pastoral E with its modal VII returns in "Un poète disait" (no. 4), the VII now being the simpler D major triad. In this song, "the poet's joy returns as he speaks of anointing his love with 'the color of a perfume that will be nameless'" (Williamson, 13).

Sans lenteur

p et très souple

p

sans rigueur

Un po-è - te di - sait que lorsqu'il é-tait jeu - - ne,

il fleuris-sait des vers.....

"Les lilas qui avaient fleuri" (no. 9) combines the pastoral ("lilacs that bloomed") with the poet's private anguish ("My heart should have broken in the midst of all this. / For it was among the white and pink orchards / that I had hoped for something . . . I don't know what . . . from you."). As the latter mood is predominant, the voice takes a simple Phrygian mode while the piano laces a D minor add6 into octave E's.

Sans lenteur *p simple*

Sans lenteur Les li-las qui a -

pp clair

- vaient fleuri..... l'année der - niè - re vont fleu - rir de nouveau.....

.... dans les tris - tes par - ter - res.

In "Par ce que j'ai souffert" (no. 11), a modal D minor suits the poet's "his resignation that the loss of his love is irrevocable" (Williamson, 18), even if he can console himself with the thought that "Because of what I have suffered, my dear little creature, / I know what another has suffered."

Assez lent *pp* avec une douceur émue

Par..... ce que j'ai souffert, ma mé - san - ge bé -

Assez lent *pp* doux et recueilli

ni - e,..... je sais..... ce qu'a..... souffert

mf l'au - tre: car..... j'é - tais deux.....

a tempo *p* très expre

Recall that no. 12 is also in a modal D minor, and below is the opening of "Demain fera un an" (no. 13).

Librement
Lent *p* *résigné*

De - main fe - ra un an qu'à Au - d'aux je cueil -

Lent *p* *grave et morne*

- lais les fleurs..... dont j'ai par

poco accel:.....

This final song brings reminiscences of several earlier ones. Here is the brief recall of no. 1, placed where the poet recalls the past with the text of the opening poem:

Modéré *pp* *comme une évocation claire, lointaine*

Elle était descendue au bas de la prai -

Modéré *pp* *très enveloppé*

- ri - e, et comme la prai - ri e é - tait toute fleu -

Examples of dominant ninth chords from other songs in the cycle

"Elle est gravement gaie" (no. 2), at bar 8, has the common 19th century figure of V9 (here V9/IV) as expressive highpoint. Bars 13-14 begin the second section: the harmony is not V9 but V11, as V11/D (or A major: V11/IV); the resolution in bar 14 is to a third substitute for D.

The musical score is for the song "Elle est gravement gaie" (no. 2). It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4.

System 1: The tempo is "Modéré, sans lenteur". The vocal line starts with a rest, then has the lyrics "Elle est gravement gai - e." starting at bar 8. The piano accompaniment features a dominant ninth chord (V9/IV) at bar 8, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "recueilli". The piano part also has a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "clair et doux".

System 2: The vocal line continues with "Par mo - ments son re - gard se le - vait com -". The piano accompaniment features a dominant ninth chord (V9/IV) at bar 13, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "poco più f". The piano part also has a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "cresc.....".

System 3: The vocal line continues with "me pour sur - pren - dre ma pen - sé - e.....". The piano accompaniment features a dominant ninth chord (V9/IV) at bar 13, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "poco più f". The piano part also has a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "cresc.....".

System 4: The vocal line continues with "Elle é - tait douce a -". The piano accompaniment features a dominant ninth chord (V9/IV) at bar 13, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "poco più f". The piano part also has a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction "cresc.....".

Other markings include "rit....." (ritardando) and "a tempo" (return to tempo) in the piano part.

Here is the song's ending. A series of complex dominants acts both as an expanded expressive highpoint and as a prolonged dominant function. The sequence of roots is Ab, Db, Bb, C, and Eb. Considering the voice part and the held chords in the piano, the basic sonorities are Abm9/13, Db13, Bb9, C9, Eb9. (In this context the harmonies of bars 23-25 mimic a traditional subdominant twist that briefly delays the tonic chord.)

The musical score is divided into four systems, each containing a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4.

System 1 (Measures 17-19): The vocal line begins with the lyrics "- lors Com - me quand il est tard". The piano part features a series of chords. Above the vocal line, the markings "contenu", "cresc. ma", and "sempre poco" are present. Below the piano part, the marking "poco accel." is visible. The system is numbered 17.

System 2 (Measures 20-22): The vocal line continues with "le velours jaune et bleu" and "d'une allée de pen -". The piano part includes a section marked "rit." (ritardando). The system is numbered 20.

System 3 (Measures 23-25): The vocal line has the lyrics "- sé - es". The piano part is marked "Un peu plus lent" and "rit.". The system is numbered 23.

System 4 (Measures 26-28): The piano part continues with a section marked "a tempo" and "clair". The system is numbered 27.

Additional markings include "mf" (mezzo-forte) at measure 20, "pp" (pianissimo) at measure 23, and "ppp" (pianississimo) at measure 27. The score concludes with a final chord in the piano part.

"Parfois, je suis triste" (no. 3). The opposition of "white-key" modality with planing of seventh chords against "black-key" complex chords is tied directly to the text: "Sometimes I am sad. . . / And, suddenly, I think of her." The base of the chord in bar 6 is F#9, reinforced by the tenor's G#4, but the entire sound is that of F#13 because of the persistent D#5 and D#6.

Assez lent et assez libre *p simplement*
 Parfois,.....

Assez lent et assez libre *p*
 je suis tris - - te.....

ardemment clair
 Plus animé Et, soudain,..... je pen - - se à

p clair
 el - - le
 chanté *mf*

"Un poète disait" (no. 4). At the end, the V9 as cadence chord is a way of providing richness of harmonic color but without sharp dissonance, relaxing, as it were, into the tonic triad. In the first bar, a process is at work that Williamson calls "harmonic intensification" (28-29). I have provided a simple reduction to demonstrate: chords 1 and 2 are dominant seventh types; chord 3 is a V9 type; chord 4 would be also, except that the voice's B3 is initially set against B#3 in the piano (whose chord is thus C#M9); chord 5 continues the half-step dissonance, A4 against the tenor's G#4, and is repeated; in chords 8-10 the dissonances slowly dissipate into the final E major triad.

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Un poète disait" (no. 4). It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the vocal line with lyrics "qui n'au-ra pas de nom..." and the piano accompaniment. The second system continues the piano accompaniment. Below the piano part, a harmonic reduction is provided, showing chords numbered 1 through 10. The reduction includes the following chord labels: EM9?, (AM7 BA* G# A*, C+7?, CM7 C#9), G7, F7, E9, C#M9, and E. The score also includes various performance markings such as "a tempo", "molto rit.", "ppp", "doux", "enveloppé", and "sans ralentir".

qui n'au-ra pas de nom...

a tempo
ppp

molto rit.
a tempo
ppp
doux
enveloppé

sans ralentir

1 2 3 4a 4b 5 6 5 7 8 9 10

EM9?
(AM7 BA* G# A* C+7?
CM7 C#9)

G7 F7 E9 C#M9 E

"Au pied de mon lit" (no. 5). In this climactic outburst—the third time the poet calls to “Virgo Lauretana”—the modal/tonal opposition we saw in no. 3 is equally strong, as the E Phrygian/minor harmonies of the address to the Virgin switch into chromatic seventh and ninth harmonies at “. . . pas digne d’être aimé d’elle” (“[I am] not worthy of her love”).

Tempo 1.
f *large, ému*

Vir-go Lau-re-ta-na, vous sa-vez qu'en ces heu-res où je ne me sens pas

di-gne d'être ai-mé d'el-le c'est vous

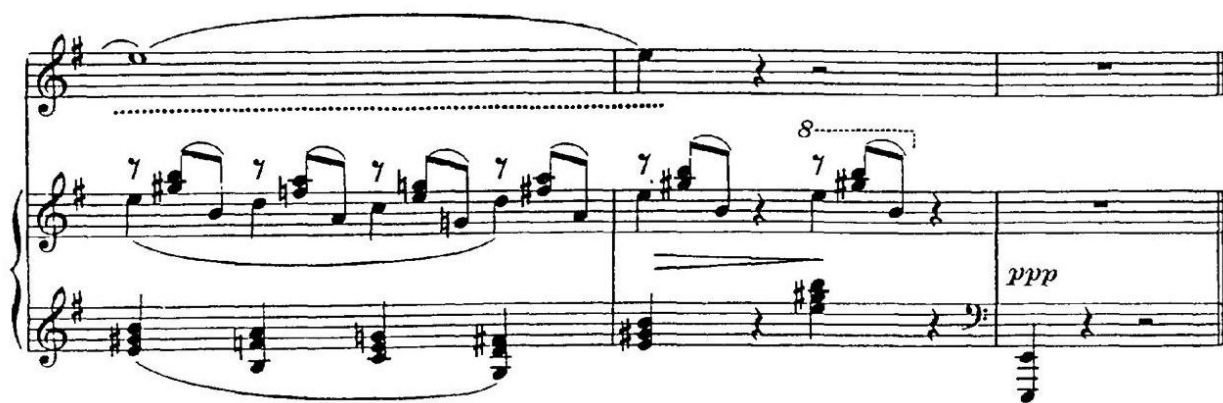
avec une douceur
p

infinité *molto rit.* *a tempo*

dont le par-fum me ra-fraîchit le cœur.

molto rit. *a tempo*
pp *expressif et clair*

(continues on the next page)



"Nous nous aimerons tant" (no. 7). Here is the familiar move at the end of a phrase or period into ambiguity by means of the major dominant ninth, here as a series of planed chords set against a rising figure in the voice. Still another example of the opposition of tonal/modal and chromatic. Note that the progression at the beginning is the same I-(b)VII we saw at the very beginning of the cycle and again at the beginning of no. 4. Williamson (37) draws attention to the role of the descending second as motivic in both melody and harmony.

This musical score is for piano and voice, featuring the lyrics "Nous nous aimerons tant que nous tai -". The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked "Lent". The piano part consists of a series of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand, creating a harmonic progression. The voice part features a rising melodic line with a series of eighth notes, marked with a "p" and "très ému et très contenu". The score is marked "pp très enveloppé" and "pp à l'aise". A boxed section highlights a specific harmonic progression in the piano part, showing a series of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand.

"Vous m'avez regardé" (no. 8). Another common but also traditional use of the dominant ninth, as the expressive and registral highpoint in a significant cadence, here the ending of the song (a few bars of coda follow in the piano).

p très intense

Que ce re - gard é - tait pas - si - on -

p

contenu

né..... et cal - me...

expressivement en dehors

suivez pp

2 Red.

"Par ce que j'ai souffert" (no. 11). The planing dominant ninths provide the expressive element above a pedal bass that depicts "weight," "burden," "forever"—words in the text. Note that here the voice and the chords in the accompaniment do not conflict, as they do at important moments in nos. 4 and 12. The dominant ninths, which move upward through a diminished seventh chord space (A-C-Eb-F# in the uppermost voice), give way again to more dissonant sonorities before the final C major triad is reached.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "père - se de tout son" under the marking *gravement tendre*. The piano accompaniment features a series of chords, with a boxed-in section labeled *expressif* showing a progression of dominant ninth chords. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "poids, à ja - mais, sur ma vi -" and includes markings for *mf*, *f*, *a tempo*, and *molto rit:.....*. The piano accompaniment includes a *cresc.....* marking and a section labeled *f soutenu*. The third system shows the vocal line concluding with a long note, and the piano accompaniment featuring a series of chords and a final C major triad.

§ 3: Charles Griffes

The compositions discussed here offer a capsule view of Charles Griffes's compositional development, the *Five German Poems* his formal training in Berlin, the song “Symphony in Yellow” and the *Roman Sketches* the Impressionist period that includes all of his best-known works, and the *Three Poems by Fiona MacLeod* the final few years (before he died in the Spanish flu pandemic) when he was experimenting with non-traditional scales.

The first of the *Five German Poems* (publ. 1909), “Auf dem Teich,” builds its accompanimental figure in what should by now be a familiar way: over the tonic, $\wedge 6$ generates the sound of Iadd6 (circled; especially with the pedal down, as the composer directs) but resolves internally—likewise with $\wedge 6$ that creates the sound of V9 (boxed) but resolves internally.

For the second of the poem's three verses, Griffes deploys dominant sevenths and ninths for the dreamy or visionary affect—see bars 10-18 on the next page. In the final verse, the closing lines “ein süßes Deingedenken, wie ein stilles Nachtgebet!” (a sweet thought of you, like a quiet night prayer!) bring the clichéd 19th century V9/V as an emotional intensifier—see bars 22 ff. below.

Ruhig und träumerisch
Tranquillo, quasi sognando

Voice

p

Auf dem Teich, dem re - gungs-lo - sen,
O'er the tarn's un - ruf - fled mir - ror

Piano

pp sempre

weilt des Mon - des hol - der Glanz,
Lies the moon - lights sil - ver sheen,

4

Hir-sche wan-deln dort am Hü-gel, bli-cken in die Nacht em-
Stags on yon-der hill are rov-ing, To the night they lift their

10

Red. *

por;
heads;

poco cresc.

manch-mal regt sich das Ge-flü-gel
Hark, a wa-ter-fowl is mov-ing

13

poco cresc.

Red. *

träu-me-risch im tie-fen Rohr.
Sleep-i-ly there-in the reeds.

16

dim. *pp*

Red. *

See - le geht mir ein sü - sses Dein - ge - den - ken, wie ein
spir - it fare Thoughts of thee as sweet and ho - ly As a

22

stil - les Nacht - ge - bet!
si - lent eve - ning prayer.

25

dim. *p* *ppp* *ritard.*

Charles Griffes, *Tone-Images*, op. 3 (publ. 1915), no. 2: “Symphony in Yellow”

The opening can be thought of as pentatonic, but the effect is not that of a scale at all but of a B major triad colored by \wedge^2 and \wedge^6 . Griffes might easily have set an expressive opposition by simply moving \wedge^6 to \wedge^7 (G# to A), thereby generating a (somewhat oddly voiced) dominant ninth, as V9/IV in B major. But he does not. There are slow stepwise changes, but those are

Larghetto (♩ = 72-80)

Voice

An om - ni - bus a . cross the bridge Crawls like a yel - low but - ter - fly,

Piano

pp *p*

more complex, as G# heads down to G-natural and F# up to it. The pattern continues until the original sonority is recovered, after which it persists for 8 bars. See reduced voiceleading below.



Replacing F# with E# facilitates a move to Bb major, then to Gb as Bb: bVI (also B: V), and it is here that a dominant ninth does appear—boxed below. Unlike the fog, this dominant dissipates, turning into a vii°7, one of the very few anywhere I find plausibly to be a minor V9 without its root. This chord anticipates a change to minor in the reprise for the third verse (at bar 34). The sound is slightly sharper with C# and D-natural but the effect is autumnal, a slightly sad fading (as in the text) of the B major sonority from the beginning.

When D-natural turns back to D# (bar 42), the sound is that of a complex and shifting V9/IV (or V13/IV). The chord as a ninth chord is settled on in bar 47 (boxed), but the function of V9/IV is not realized; instead, a sudden chromatic turn (as if *sforzando* in this context) initiates a further set of slowly shifting chromatic notes to close on the chord of the opening, gradually clearing to a B major triad. Overall, the music of the third verse is like a traditional coda progression of minor tonic, subdominant-leaning, and diminished seventh over a tonic pedal (here the reinforced tonic plus its fifth).

from the tem-ple elms, And at my feet the pale green

39

mf

* *red.* *

Thames Lies like a rod of rip-pled jade.

44

pp *rit.*

colla voce *mf*

* *red.* *

50

p *pp* *ppp*

* *red.* *

20 *f* All of the soul of me... would leap a far, *colla voce* *f* *p* *molto espressivo*

22 *mf* *dim.* *p* If

24 *p* that called... me to thee,

Charles Griffes, *Three Poems by Fiona MacLeod*, op. 11 (1918), no. 3: “The Rose of the Night”

The third of the MacLeod songs is the best known. Its materials are quite different from the more traditional methods we have seen in the three songs examined above. The harmonies are much more complex and dissonant, and the exotic or artificial scales of Griffes’s last years appear, as in the beginning (A–B#–C#–E–G–nat–G#). Nevertheless, the few dominant ninths are in quite traditional functional roles as expressive highpoints and/or verse-ending open sonorities.

Measures 5 and 7 of the song "The Rose of the Night". The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The vocal line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Measure 5 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The lyrics for measure 5 are "The dark rose of thy". Measure 7 begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The lyrics for measure 7 are "mouth Draw nigh - er, draw". The piano accompaniment features complex, dissonant harmonies with many accidentals.

The difference is that the highpoints are effectively whispers, evident in the first one, where an E major ninth chord follows a thwarted climax and leads to another, as the first verse-ending statement of “O Rose of my Desire” is given in hushed tones (see continuation of the example on the next page).

Measures 12 and the continuation of the song "The Rose of the Night". The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The vocal line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Measure 12 begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The lyrics for measure 12 are "wind of fire! ——— The". The piano accompaniment features complex, dissonant harmonies with many accidentals. The continuation of the song is shown in a separate box, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The lyrics for the continuation are "wind and the rose and —". The piano accompaniment continues with complex, dissonant harmonies.

p più tranquillo

dark - - ness, O Rose of my De -

16

dim. più tranquillo

p

In subsequent verses, the statements are still hushed but now the dominant ninth is integral to them. See this and a second example on the next page. Finally, at bar 61, G#9 is involved in the typical *forte-to-fortissimo* climax.

sea, They are thee, O Rose of my De -

37

p

sire!

39

p

f

Rose, O Rose of my De - sire!

55 *p*

58 *poco accel.*

61 *f* *cresc.* *ff* *marcato*

a tempo *mf*

sempre pedale

A reduction of these measures:

Note that in bar 62, after A# relaxes into A-natural, we have returned to the scale of the beginning. This persists for four bars to end the song.

59

8

8

8

Charles Griffes, *Roman Sketches*, op. 7 (publ. 1917), no. 1: “The White Peacock”

Uniquely among all the compositions I have looked at for this project, “The White Peacock” places the major dominant ninth chord at its core. This can be seen readily in Taylor Greer’s linear-analysis reduction, reproduced below with my annotations.* The first, third, and sixth circled chords are the B major ninth that sits at the “background,” the second and fifth are the same chord with a lowered fifth, and the fourth is read by Greer as a functional II (as if a complex Neapolitan chord, although the sound is that of a major dominant ninth).

FIGURE 5. Griffes, “The White Peacock”: middleground reduction of complete piece

EM: V^7 9 7 5 9 7 5 9 7 5 II 9 7 5 V^7 9 7 5 9 7 5

It is important to note that, although the key is unequivocally E major, there is no direct expression of the tonic triad anywhere in the piece. Here is the reduction again, with my attempts at filling out the labels for the harmonies. Apart from pinning down a functional explanation for the first chord (and therefore the chord pair as secondary-dominant to dominant) and locating one more dominant ninth among the neighbor chords (D9 at bar 14), I’m not sure this tells us much, though it does perhaps bring a little attention to the pitch F-natural and sonorities built on it or incorporating it—a point that Greer emphasizes.

EM: V^{+5}/V 9 7 5 f $D9$ 9 7 5 VI $?$ $C\#7$ IV 9 7 5 II 9 7 5 $V7$ 9 7 5 $?$ V^{+5}/V 9 7 5

* Taylor A. Greer, “The Unfolding Tale of Griffes’s ‘White Peacock,’” *Gamut* 3/1 (2010): 167-204.

If one is going to use the hierarchies of linear analysis, then I disagree with Greer's reading of a prolonged dominant over the distance of bars 1-15. The sense of a sweep into resolution at bars 7-8 is unmistakable, as is the simple shift from I to bVI in bars 11-12. There is no direct expression of a tonic triad, true, but it's very close on beat 4 of bar 8, and the bass E with reinforcing fifth in bars 9 and 11 and same for C-natural in bar 12 are hard to ignore. I have written several times already about the idea of balance of function and sound, and this seems to me an excellent example: the functional hierarchies are clear and the presence and character of the tonic are affirmed, but the real interest (and most of the duration) throughout the piece is given to complex chords clustered about V9.

Functional analysis for the first system (measures 1-12):

Measure 1: E: V/V (S?)
 Measure 2: V D
 Measure 3: ii (S)
 Measure 4: V D
 Measure 5: I ——— () T
 Measure 6: V over I T
 Measure 7: V D
 Measure 8: I ——— () T
 Measure 9: V over I D
 Measure 10: V D
 Measure 11: bVI ()
 Measure 12: VI T

Postscript to the above: Here is a simplified version of the progression in the manner of the decades after 1860. The move from bar 2 to bar 3 is clumsy but could have been easily fixed with some internal shifting about. Simplified general functions are dominant and tonic.

Functional analysis for the simplified version:

Measure 1: E: V ———
 Measure 2: V ———
 Measure 3: V ———
 Measure 4: V ———
 Measure 5: V ———
 Measure 6: V ———
 Measure 7: V ———
 Measure 8: V ———
 Measure 9: V ———
 Measure 10: V ———
 Measure 11: V ———
 Measure 12: I ———

The foundational role of V9 in “The White Peacock” doesn’t extend very far into the details of the piece. Bars 1-12 (below) of course have the extended V9 at the opening (boxed) and its version with lowered fifth (circled).

Larguidamente e molto rubato

Piano

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system shows the opening of the piece, with a boxed section (bars 1-3) and a circled section (bars 4-6). The second system continues the piece, showing bars 7-9. The third system shows bars 10-12. The fourth system shows bars 13-15. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, and *ppp*, and a *una corda* instruction. The tempo/mood is indicated as **Larguidamente e molto rubato**.

At bar 16, after the turn to bVI , V9 is regained (boxed in bar 16) and extended in a different way than in the opening by revoicings (first box in bar 17), chromatic planing (second box in bar 17), and a surround of accent neighbors (bar 18), but V9 largely gives way to V7 at “Con languore.”

As the “con languore” section develops, the dominant ninth reappears as Eb9 in the rather quick *crescendo* toward Db(add6). (One might also find it in the bar before if you include the right-hand eighth notes.) When the *forte* passage is over, C#13, then 9, serves a section-ending or scene changing role.

22 *p esitando*

23 *affrett. mf*

24 *f*

25 *affrett.*

26 *f dim.*

27

27 *p tranquillo*

28

There are only a few instances of V9 in this frankly developmental section that leads to the highest registral and volume climax by bar 44. (Example continues on the next page.)

The musical score consists of five systems of piano notation, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The systems are labeled with measure numbers 29, 32, 34, 36, and 37.

- System 1 (Measures 29-31):** Features complex V9 chords in the right hand and simpler accompaniment in the left hand. Measure 29 is marked with a large number '29'.
- System 2 (Measures 32-33):** Measure 32 is marked with a large number '32'. A *cresc.* marking is present above the right hand staff.
- System 3 (Measures 34-35):** Measure 34 is marked with a large number '34'. A *dim.* marking is present above the right hand staff.
- System 4 (Measures 36-37):** Measure 36 is marked with a large number '36'. Dynamic markings *mf* and *pp* are present. The right hand features a series of chords, and the left hand features a series of descending eighth-note patterns, some marked with a '7' (seventh).
- System 5 (Measures 37-44):** Measure 37 is marked with a large number '37'. The system continues with complex chords and descending eighth-note patterns in both hands, ending with a *p* marking.

39 *p* *cresc.*

41 *mf* *cresc.*

43 *f* *cresc.*

44 *ff*

45

The progression of the bass from bar 44 is D–D \flat –C, then E–D \sharp –D–natural–C \sharp (C–natural) to B in bar 47. One or another shape expressing or relating to E: V9 is then heard through the end of bar 51, when a reprise of the E-major passage from the beginning is given through and including the bars on bVI (from 13-14; here, 56-57) and a surprisingly clichéd cadential progression follows: E: bVI–ii–V–I, but where the position of ii is taken by Vm9 (b5)/V—that is to say, an F \sharp minor9 chord with lowered fifth—the position of V by V9 at the end of the bar, and the position of I only by its root in the bass, as the cadence is deflected—and deflected again till it gives up and we hear only the V9 from the beginning with its secondary dominant, which gets the last word.

The image displays four systems of musical notation, measures 46 through 49, in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The notation is for piano, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) for each measure.

- Measure 46:** The bass line features a descending eighth-note scale: D4, D \flat 4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3. The treble line has a series of chords, with an 8-measure rest indicated above the staff.
- Measure 47:** The bass line continues with a descending eighth-note scale: D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. The treble line has a series of chords, with an 8-measure rest indicated above the staff.
- Measure 48:** The bass line features a descending eighth-note scale: D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. The treble line has a series of chords, with an 8-measure rest indicated above the staff.
- Measure 49:** The bass line features a descending eighth-note scale: D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. The treble line has a series of chords, with an 8-measure rest indicated above the staff.

Dynamic markings include *ppp* (pianissimo) and *pp* (pianissimo).

53 *pp* *p*

56 *mf*

59 *ppp*

62 *molto dim. e rit.* 67

Charles Griffes, *Roman Sketches*, no. 2: "Nightfall"

For the other pieces in *Roman Sketches*, I have simply reproduced a few passages and marked appearances of major dominant ninth chords. All are instances of uses we have seen multiple times already, and none begins to approach the significance of the B major 9 in "The White Peacock."

The musical score for "Nightfall" from Charles Griffes' *Roman Sketches*, no. 2, is presented in five systems. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings like *pp*, *p*, and *mf*.

- System 1 (Measures 65-67):** Measure 65 is marked *pp*. Measure 67 is marked *pp* and *dim.*.
- System 2 (Measures 69-71):** Measure 69 is marked *pp* and *tre corde p espress.*. Measures 70 and 71 are marked *p*.
- System 3 (Measures 73-75):** Measure 73 is marked *rubato*. Measure 75 is marked *cresc.* and *mf*.
- System 4 (Measures 77-79):** Measure 77 is marked *dim.*. Measure 79 is marked *rit.*.
- System 5 (Measures 81-83):** Measure 81 is marked *dim.*. Measure 83 is marked *rit.*.

Charles Griffes, *Roman Sketches*, no. 3: "The Fountain of Acqua Paola"

See the note under no. 2 "Nightfall."

Allegro moderato (♩ = 104-108)

Piano

pp

p espressivo

3

5 *p*

7 *cresc.*

12 *poco rit.* *Meno mosso* *p rubato* *pp* *pp* *3*

15 *3* *3* *3* *3*

17 *pp* *pp* *3* *3* *3*

19 *pp* *pp* *3* *3* *f* *3* *3* *3* *3*

21 *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

The image displays three staves of musical notation for piano pieces by Charles Griffes. The first staff, numbered 55, is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second staff, numbered 56, is in 4/4 time with the same key signature, featuring a *molto dim.* marking and a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff, numbered 59, is in 4/4 time with the same key signature, marked *Tempo I^o* and *pp* (*p espressivo*).

Charles Griffes, *Roman Sketches*, no. 4: "Clouds"

See the note under no. 2 "Nightfall."

The image displays two staves of musical notation for piano pieces by Charles Griffes. The first staff, numbered 15, is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), marked *Più mosso* and *p*, with a *cresc.* marking. The second staff, numbered 17, is in 3/4 time with the same key signature, marked *f* and *p*, with triplet and sextuplet markings.

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 19 through 21. Measure 19 is marked with a crescendo and acceleration, indicated by the text "cresc. e poco accel.". The music features a series of chords and a melodic line in the right hand, with a complex bass line in the left hand. Measure 21 is marked piano (pp) and una corda, and features a series of chords and a melodic line in the right hand, with a complex bass line in the left hand. The score is written in a key signature of three flats and a 4/4 time signature.

Postscript: I confess a personal interest in Griffes's work as I played almost all of his piano music during my teenage years and performed much of it in public. The one exception was the Sonata; I owned a copy and practiced the piece for a little while but never really learned it. At the time (1960s), there was strong motivation to include music by American composers in recitals—in fact, MTNA required it for their competitions. I can recall playing the Copland Piano Variations, his Passacaglia, and the Roy Harris Toccata, and I remember hearing others play the Ben Weber Passacaglia, a Norman Dello Joio sonata, and William Schuman's *Three-Score Set*. And of course the Barber Sonata, for those few who could handle it, was a show stopper. I never played it, but I did study and perform the *Excursions* during my undergraduate years.